

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

April 6, 2004

LB 1231A

the body, I wanted to respond to Senator Chambers for just a minute, and let him know that this has been on my desk for about a week now, and I've been trying to decide what the best way to approach this is. And I don't know, Senator Chambers, if I've chosen the best way. I'd be happy for the input from anybody from this office. But circulating right now among Government Committee members is an interim study resolution. This is more complicated than it appears at first blush. But my aim would be to come back with legislation next fall so that we could clear the air on this. I do think that we should look at not only the state benefits and what the criteria are, but we should also look at what the federal government does. Because as I understand it, all their different aid programs have different criteria. Some will take every category except those who are dishonorably discharged; others will take one or two categories of veterans. So the federal government does it a lot differently than we do. And I'd like to look into that, and try to come back with a consensus that will tell us if we've been doing it right already, and if not, how should we be doing it differently. I don't think that we want to cut off people just at the knees who have been receiving benefits all this time. And there's also the question of peacetime versus active service veterans. And we allowed, a number of years back, for the peacetime veterans to be eligible for these benefits too. So we probably need to look at that. We need to look at how much money there is in the fund. We also need to look at the history of this whole thing, and why we've established it the way we have. So...and the types of situations in which general discharges are made, which is what you were just talking about. And has it been the same through the years? Has that changed over time? So we are definitely going to look into this hard. I talked with the director of the Veterans Administration this morning, told him we want a briefing, we want public hearings, we want people to be able to come in and tell how it affects them, if it affects them. And we'll come back. If it were possible, and maybe it is possible, to do it quicker than that, I'd be happy to. But I don't think it's an easy question. And to get a bill together just on the spur of the moment, I'm not certain that we could do. So I wanted to explain at least that we are concerned about it, and we are going to be looking into it. And if you'd like the rest of my time for any reason,